

## THE CARE OF CHILDREN WITH HARE LIP AND CLEFT PALATE BEFORE AND AFTER OPERATION

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ONE of the deformities most frequently met with is that of hare lip and cleft palate, and in years past the prognosis in such cases seemed most unfavorable. However, with the better, broader understanding of aural surgery, and the continued advancement in the combined professions of medicine and nursing, the lessened danger of mortality and the wonderful changes wrought by the skillful surgeon, the future holds an aspect which is infinitely brighter for these unfortunate and afflicted children.

To the average observer, it might seem that the success of a cleft palate and hare lip operation depended wholly upon the surgeon, but the intelligent and faithful nursing and after-care has much to do with the ultimate success.

The appearance and condition of children upon admission to a hospital is usually emaciated, owing to imperfect nutrition. Therefore, the first duty is to select a food that agrees with the child, build it up, and prepare it for the operation; also, during this preparatory process, to carefully watch for any physical weakness, such as heart, lung, kidney and cerebral, as frequently these have resulted in dangerous post-operative complications. The commonest we have to contend with are:

1. Shock.
2. Pneumonia.
3. Intestinal Disorders.
4. Brain Complications.

Surgeons advise operating on these cases as young as possible, preferably one to two months old, as then the cartilage of the palate is soft and pliable and conforms readily to treatment. The lip is less sensitive and the child outgrows the scar to a very great degree. To completely repair the deformity of hare lip and cleft palate, three operations are necessary, viz.: hard palate, lip, and twelve to fifteen months later the soft palate is closed.

During the operation the child unavoidably swallows a great amount of blood; therefore, upon the return from the operating room, we give gastric lavage of sterile water, followed by normal salt solution



colonic flushing, washing out the alimentary tract as thoroughly as possible.

Our post-operative treatment is as follows:

(a) Castor oil two hours after operation. Dose according to age and condition of child, usually one to two drams.

(b) Brandy, five minims every three hours, for at least forty-eight hours.

(c) Retention enema of normal salt solution, two ounces, with brandy one dram. Given every four hours for first two days.

(d) Irrigation of mouth and nose with warm boric solution (one-half per cent. saturate solution) two pints every three hours the first twenty-four hours, and every four hours afterward.

An important factor in irrigating is the position in which the child is placed. After protecting the child with a small rubber sheet and towel, it should be put across the knee face down, using a syringe made purposely for these cases (see cut). One great difficulty we have to combat is an intestinal disturbance, caused by the amount of solution swallowed during irrigation, with even so weak an antiseptic as boric acid. Then, again, the accumulation of mucus secreted requires faithful and careful attention, therefore the irrigation in such cases is an essential which cannot be neglected.

For a temperature ranging from  $102^{\circ}$  or above, alcohol sponges are given. We also give tepid tubs ( $90^{\circ}$  to  $95^{\circ}$ ), which we find very effectual, keeping the child in from five to seven minutes.

For twelve hours after the operation, nourishment is withheld, sterile water being given freely. Then nourishment diluted one half is resumed, which is gradually increased until the child is given the full strength of food found suitable before operation.

In cases of hare lip and cleft palate, as in all others, each case presents individual points to be met and treated accordingly.

Prognosis: In an uncomplicated case, complete physical recovery, wonderfully improved appearance, and marked improvement in articulation.



Not wealth, nor fame, nor brilliant gifts of mind,  
Nor length of life I ask of Thee, most kind  
And gracious Lord: This blessing would I gain—  
*Grant to my hands the power of easing pain.*

R. B. S.,  
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